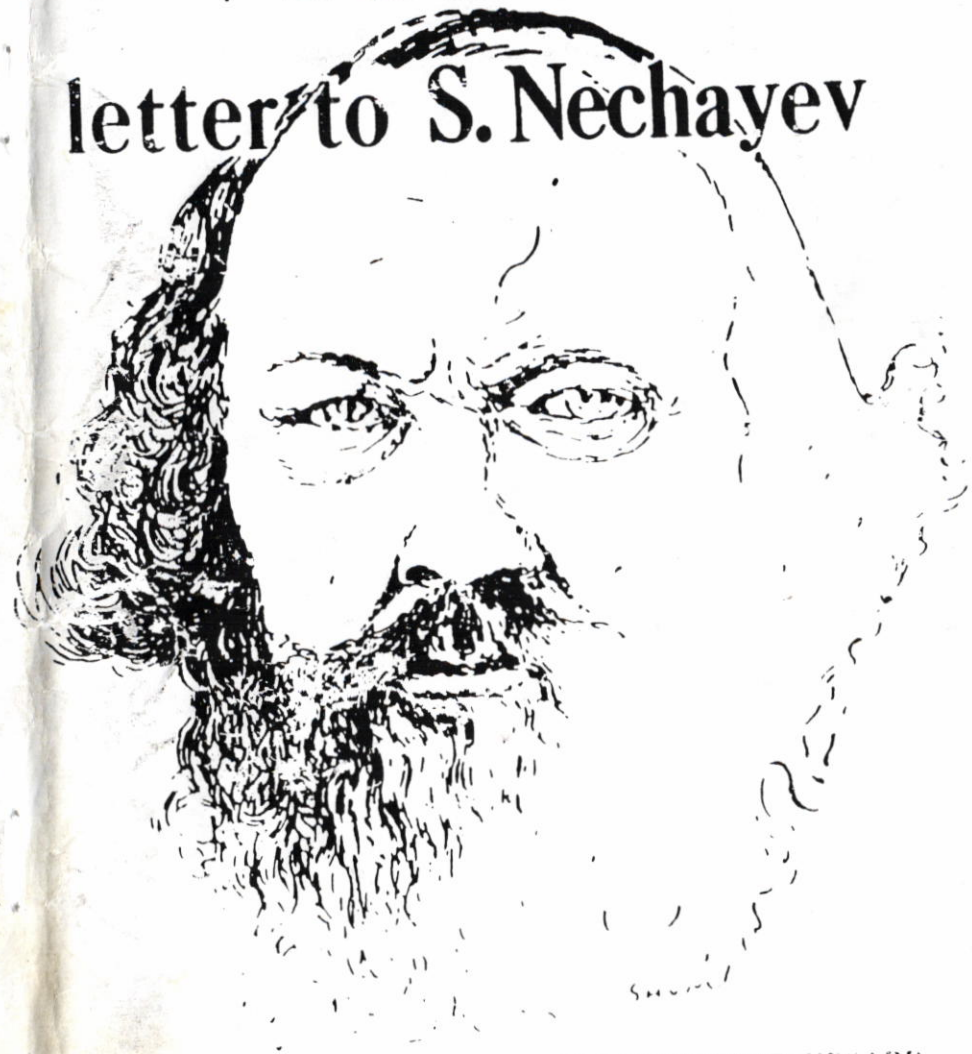


Flavio Costantini

BAKUNIN ON VIOLENCE

letter to S. Nechayev



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Frank Masereel: woodcut

Introduction:

There has been a concerted effort by some people to attach Mikhail Bakunin's name to the controversial historical document: Catechism of the Revolutionist (1869). We never believed the "Catechism" to be consistant with Bakunin's anarchist philosophy, and now, with the discovery of Bakunin's letter to Nechayev in the Herzen archives (see:"Daughter of a Revolutionary: Natalie Herzen and the Bakunin-Nechayev circle" edited and with an introduction by Michael Confino.) the authorship of the "Catechism" is established beyond doubt. It was Sergey Nechayev.

We hope that the following letter, bursting with the humanist concepts of Bakunin and imbued with faith in humanity will help to remove the distorted image of his revolutionary anarchist ideas and of his personality.

Through revolution, the letter shows, Bakunin aimed to make it possible for a liberated humanity to achieve that splendour in life which only the rich and powerful now possess.

This historic document has been published in Europe in various periodicals including Encounter(England) and Cahiers du Monde Russe et Sovietique (Paris). We hope that serious American publications will also reprint this letter of Bakunin.



Bakunin as a young man

their name, give us your hand and your word of honour that from now on this programme, this plan of organization, propaganda and action, will be absolute law and the indispensable basis of the whole society in Russia.

7. We shall believe you and will make a new firm bond with you—Ogarev, Ozerov, S. Serebrennikov and I, possibly Tata, if she should so wish and if you and all the others agree. We shall in truth be People's Brothers who live and act abroad. Therefore, without ever showing any undue curiosity, we shall have the right to know and will indeed know actively and in the necessary detail the situation of conspiratorial affairs and immediate aims in Russia.

8. Then we, all the above-mentioned, will set up a bureau abroad to deal with all Russian affairs abroad, without exception, taking into consideration the lines of Russian policy, but choosing freely methods, people and means.

9. In addition, *Kolokol* will be published with a clear revolutionary, socialist programme, if this is necessary and if money for it is available.

Here are my conditions, Nechayev. If you have been inspired by good sense and sober judgement and if love of the cause is really stronger in you than all other considerations, you will accept them.

And if you do not accept, my decision is inflexible. I shall have to break all ties with you. I will act independently, taking nothing into consideration except my own conscience, understanding, and duty.

M. BAKUNIN

shortest possible time.

6. You will abandon purposeless or, worse, positively harmful attempts for a *rapprochement* with Utin, who most vilely slanders both of us and all that is ours in Russia, and on the contrary will undertake, having chosen the right time and occasion in order not to harm the cause, to conduct open war against him.

These are my personal conditions; a refusal of one of them, in particular of the first five and the first half of the sixth (*i.e.* breaking off all ties with Utin) will be sufficient reason for me to break all relations with you. All this has to be done by you generously, frankly, honestly without any misunderstandings, reservations, hints and equivocations. It is time we put our cards on the table.

Here are the general conditions:

1. Without naming the names, which we do not need, you will show us the actual state of your organization and cause in Russia, of your hopes, your propaganda, your movements, without exaggeration and deceit.

2. You will eradicate from your organization any use of police and Jesuitical systems, confining their application to the government and inimical parties and only when it is really necessary in practice and in accordance with common sense.

3. You will drop the absurd idea that revolution can be made outside the people and without its participation, and will adopt as a basis of your organization the spontaneous people's revolution in which the people will be the army and the organization only its staff.

4. You will adopt as a basis of the organization the social-revolutionary programme expounded in the first number of *The People's Cause* [*Narodnoe Delo*], the plan of organization and revolutionary propaganda expounded by me in my letter, with such additions and alterations as we shall together find necessary at a general meeting.

5. All that has been agreed in our common discussion and unanimous decisions will be proposed by you to all your friends in Russia and abroad. Should they reject our decisions, you will have to decide for yourself whether you wish to follow them or us, to break your ties with them or with us.

6. If they accept the programme, organizational plan, the rules of the society, the plan for propaganda and for revolutionary action worked out by us, you will, in your own and

Mikhail Bakunin to Sergey Nechayev

June 2 1870 Locarno Switzerland

DEAR FRIEND,

I now address you and, through you, your and our Committee. I trust that you have now reached a safe place where, free from petty squabbles and cares, you can quietly consider your own and our common situation, the situation of our common cause.

Let us begin by admitting that our first campaign which started in 1869 is lost and we are beaten. Beaten because of two main causes; first—the people, who we had every *right* to hope would rise, did not rise. It appears that its cup of suffering, the measure of its patience, has not yet overflowed. Apparently no self-confidence, no faith in its rights and its power, has yet kindled within it, and there were not enough men acting in common and dispersed throughout Russia capable of arousing this confidence. Second cause: our organization was found wanting both in quality and quantity of its members and in its structure. That is why we were defeated and lost much strength and many valuable people.

This is an undisputable fact which we ought to realize without equivocation in order to make it a point of departure for further deliberations and deeds.

You, and doubtless your friends as well, had realized it long before you spoke to me about it. In fact one could say that you never spoke to me about it and I had to guess it for myself from many obvious contradictions in your talk and finally to convince myself by reference to the general state of affairs which spoke so clearly that it was impossible to hide it even from uninitiated friends. You more than half realized it when you visited me in Locarno. But nevertheless you spoke to me with complete assurance and in the most positive manner about the imminence of the inevitable revolt. You deceived me, while I, suspecting, or feeling instinctively the presence of *deceit*, consciously and systematically refused to believe it. You continued to speak and act as if you told me nothing but the truth. Had you shown me the real state of affairs during your stay in Locarno, as regards both the people and the organization, I would have written my appeal to the officers in the same spirit but in different words. This would have been better for me, for you and, most important, for the cause. I would not have spoken to them about the impending rising.

I am not angry with you and I do not reproach you, knowing that if you lie or hide the truth, you do it without self-interest and only because you consider it useful to the cause. I, *and all of us*, love you sincerely and have a great respect for you because we have never met a man more unselfish and devoted to the cause than you are.

But neither love nor respect can prevent me telling you frankly that the system of deceit, which is increasingly becoming your sole system, your main weapon and means, is fatal to the cause itself.

But before trying, and I hope succeeding, in proving this to you, I must say a few words about my attitude to you and to your Committee[1] and will try to explain why, in spite of all forebodings and rational or instinctive doubts which increasingly forewarned me about the truth of your words, up to my last visit to Geneva [2] I spoke and acted as if I believed them unreservedly.

1. The Central Committee of Narodnaya Rasprava (Peoples' Vengeance)

2. The visit referred to was in May 1870 when Bakunin met German Lopatin whose information about Nechayev's personality and activity evidently had an influence on Bakunin.

you would not hesitate to lie if this seemed to you to be useful to the cause. Nor do I believe in the justice or wisdom of what you imagine to be useful, because you and your Committee have given me too many proofs of your positive lack of sense. But denying your veracity and your wisdom, I do not deny your energy and your undoubted devotion to the cause, and believe that there are few people in Russia equal to you in either. This, I repeat again, was the chief, indeed the only basis of my love for you and my faith in you and I am convinced it still remains a guarantee that you alone of all the Russians I know are capable of serving the revolutionary cause in Russia and destined to do so but only if you want and are able to alter the whole system of your activities in Russia and abroad. However, if you do not wish to change it, you will inevitably become a man highly harmful to the cause as a result of those very qualities which are your strength.

As a consequence of these considerations and in spite of all that has happened between us, I would wish not only to remain allied with you, but to make this union even closer and firmer, on condition that you will change the system entirely and will make mutual trust, sincerity and truth the foundation of our future relations. Otherwise the break between us is inevitable.

Now here are my personal and general conditions. I will enumerate the personal ones first:

1. You must shield and clear me entirely in the Lyubavin affair by writing a collective letter to Ogarev, Tata, Ozerov and S. Serebrennikov in which you will announce, as is indeed the truth, that I did not know anything about the letter of the Committee and that it has been written without my knowledge and consent.

2. That you have read my reply to Lyubavin with the enclosed receipt for 300 rubles and having undertaken to send it, have either posted it or not.

3. That I have never directly or indirectly interfered in the disposal of the Bakhmetev fund. That you have received the whole of the monies at various times: first from the hands of Herzen[30] and Ogarev and the remaining, larger part from the hands of Ogarev who, after the death of Herzen, was the only one who had the right to dispose of it, and that you received this fund in the name of the Committee whose manager you were.

4. If you have not yet given Ogarev the receipt for this fund, then you must do so.

5. You have to return as soon as possible the note from Danielson through us and through Lopatin. If you have not got it (though I am sure you have) you must in the same letter undertake to deliver it in the

friends.

There is no doubt that you have perpetrated many stupidities and many dirty tricks, positively harmful and destructive to the cause. But it is also clear to me that all your inept actions and terrible blunders were not caused by your self-interest, greed, vanity, or ambition, but only by your misunderstanding of the situation. You are a passionately dedicated man; there are few like you. This is your strength, your valour and your justification. You and your Committee, if the latter really exists, are full of energy and are prepared to execute without fuss anything you consider useful for the cause—this is valuable. But neither your Committee nor you possess any common sense—this is now obvious. You have taken to the Jesuit system like children, and seeing in it your whole strength, success, and salvation have forgotten the very essence and aim of the society: liberation of the people not only from the government but from you, from yourselves. Having adopted this system you have carried it to a monstrously stupid extreme, have corrupted yourselves by it and have disgraced the society throughout the world by your only too obvious guile and incredible stupidities—like your stern letters to Lyubavin and to Natalya Alexeevna[33] which were matched by your polite patience towards Utin; like your attempts to ingratiate yourself with him while he slandered all of us loudly and impudently; like your stupid communist programme and a whole series of shameless deceits. All this proves an absence of common sense, an ignorance of people, relationships, and things. It follows that one cannot rely on your common sense, at least at present, in spite of the fact that you are an extremely intelligent man, capable of further development. This, however, gives hope for the future; at present you are as clumsy and inept as a boy.

Having finally convinced myself of this, my position is now as follows:

I do not believe your words, your unsupported assurances and promises which are not confirmed by facts, knowing that

33.Nechayev wrote another threatening letter, this time to Nathalie Alexeevna concerning a collection of posthomous articles by Herzen which his family was preparing to publish, some of which criticised "the young emigration".

It might be said that I have been separated from Russia for *thirty years*. From 1840 to 1851 I was abroad, first with a passport, then as an *émigré*. In 1851, after a two-year imprisonment in Saxon and Austrian fortresses I was extradited to the Russian government which held me prisoner for another six years, first in the Alexeev ravelin of the Peter and Paul Fortress, then in Schlüsselburg. In 1857 I was sent to Siberia and spent two years in western and two in eastern Siberia. In 1861 I fled from Siberia and since then, obviously, I have not returned to Russia. Therefore in the last thirty years I have only lived four years (nine years ago) from 1857 to 1861 in freedom in Russia, *i.e.* in Siberia. This of course gave me the opportunity of getting to know the Russian people better, the peasants, the petty bourgeoisie, the merchants (specifically Siberian merchants), but not the revolutionary youth. In my time there were no other political exiles in Siberia, except a few Decembrists and Poles. True, I knew *also* the four *Petrashevtsy*: Petrashevsky himself, Lvov and Tol,[3] but these people represented only a sort of transition from the Decembrists to the real youth—they were doctrinaire, bookish socialists, Fourierists and pedagogues. I do not know the real youth in whom I believe, this classless class, this hopeless phalanx of the people's revolution about whom I have written several times and only now gradually begin to learn.

The majority of Russians who came to London to do homage to Alexander Herzen[4] were either respectable people, or writers or liberally and democratically inclined officers. The first serious Russian revolutionary was Potebnya;[5] the second was

3.Mikhail Vasilievich Butashevich-Petrashevsky (1821-66) organized a socialist discussion group in St. Petersburg in the 1840's. He, along with Lvov, an officer and scientist and Tol, a literary man, were arrested in 1849 and sentenced to hard labor in Siberia. Also arrested in connection with this group was Dostoevsky whose character of Peter Verhovensky in "The Posessed" was based on Nechayev.

4.Alexander Herzen (1812-1870)major Russian socialist theorist who edited Kolokol (The Bell) lived in European exile from 1847.

5.Andrey Afanasievich Potebnya (1838-63) was a member of a revolutionary organization of Russian officers in Poland who took part in 1863 Polish uprising.

you. I shall not speak about Utin[6] and the other Geneva emigrants. Thus, before I met you, the real Russian revolutionary youth remained for me *terra incognita*.

I did not need much time to understand your earnestness and to believe you. I was convinced and still remain convinced that even if you were few, you represent a serious undertaking, the only serious revolutionary movement in Russia. Having been convinced of this, I said to myself that my duty lay in helping you with all my power and means and in allying myself as much as possible with your Russian cause. This decision was all the easier for me because your programme, at least during the last year, not only resembled but was identical with my programme, worked out on the basis of the total experience of a rather long political life. Let us define in a few lines this programme on the basis of which we were completely united last year and from which you seem now to be departing to a considerable extent, but to which I, on my side, have remained faithful to a degree which would oblige me to break all *intimate political relations* with you, if your convictions and your, or your friends', departure from it were completely final.

The programme can be clearly expressed in a few words: total destruction of the framework of state and law and of the whole of the so-called bourgeois civilization by a spontaneous people's revolution invisibly led, not by an official dictatorship, but by a nameless and collective one, composed of those in favour of total people's liberation from all oppression, firmly united in a secret society and always and everywhere acting in support of a common aim and in accordance with a common programme.

Such was the ideal and such was the plan on the basis of which I joined you and gave you my hand in order to realize it. You know yourself how faithful I remained to the promise of the union which I recognized. You know how much faith I had in you, having once convinced myself of your earnestness and of the similarity in our revolutionary programmes. I did not ask who your friends were, nor how many. I did not check your strength; I took your word.

6. Nikolay Isaakovich Utin (1841-83), a Marxist and founder of Russian section of the 1st International, edited Narodnoe Delo (The People's Cause) 1868-70. Later, he renounced all political activity and was able to retrn from exile.

cause, as you still remain in my eyes in spite of all that has happened—how could I imagine that you would tell such barefaced and stupid lies[38] to me of whose devotion you could have no doubts? Why did you not realize that your impudent lies would be discovered and that I would demand, would have to demand, an explanation from Lopatin, the more so because my ultimatum contained a clearly expressed demand that the Lyubavin affair must be completely clarified? *Another fact*: Lyubavin did not get my reply to his rude letter, therefore he did not receive my receipt which I enclosed with this reply. When I showed you my reply and receipt, you asked me to wait and not send them. I did not agree, and you offered to post them but did not do so.

This is enough, Nechayev—our old relationship and our mutual obligations are at an end. You yourself have destroyed them. If you thought and still think that you have bound me, entangled me morally and materially, you are completely mistaken. Nothing on earth can bind me against my conscience, against my honour, against my will, against my revolutionary convictions and duty.

It is true that thanks to you my financial position is now very difficult. I have no means of existence, and my only source of income, translating Marx and the hope of other literary work connected with it, has now dried up. I am aground and do not know how I shall manage to get off, but that is the least of my troubles.

It is true that I have compromised friends and was compromised in front of them. It is true that I am being slandered in connection with the fund, in connection with Tata, and finally in connection with all the recent events in Russia.

But all this will not deter me. In case of dire necessity I am prepared for a public admission and confession of my stupidity, of which of course I shall be very much ashamed, but which will reflect even more upon you—but I shall not remain your unwilling ally.

Thus I give notice to you that all my horrid relationships with you and with your cause are at an end. *But in breaking them off I offer you new relations on a different basis.*

Lopatin, who does not know you as well as I do, would have been surprised at my suggestion after all that has happened between us. You will not be surprised, nor will my close

What I found out was enough to induce me to take measures against further exploitation of myself and my friends by you. Accordingly I wrote you an ultimatum which I hastily read to you at the Turks[31] and which you appeared to accept.

Since then I have not seen you.

The day before yesterday I finally received a letter from Lopatin from which I gathered two rather sad facts: firstly you (I do not wish to use any adjectives) you lied when you reported to me your talk with Lopatin. Everything you told me about his alleged words was a compiete lie. He did not tell you that I gave him letters from Lyubavin: "The old man could not hold out, he is in our hands now and cannot do anything against us, and we can now all . . .", to which you were supposed to have replied: "If Bakunin was so weak as to give you Lyubavin's letters, we have other letters, etc."[32] You lied, you slandered Lopatin, and you deliberately duped me. Lopatin is surprised that I believed you, and in a polite form deduces from this fact a conclusion less than flattering to my mental capacities. He is right. In this case I showed myself a complete fool. He would not have judged me quite so severely had he known how deeply, how passionately, how tenderly I loved you and believed in you! You were able, and found it useful, to kill this belief in me—so much the worse for you. How could I think that a man who was intelligent and devoted to the

31.A villa previously inhabited by Turkish people where Nechayev and Bakunin had a meeting.

32.Lyubavin, a student, acted as intermediary between Bakunin and the publisher Polyakov for whom Bakunin was to translate vol.1 of Marx's Capital into Russian and for which he received a 300 ruble advance. When, in February 1870 Nechayev convinced Bakunin to give this work up in order to devote himself totally to revolutionary activities, he (Nechayev)undertook to sort outthings with the publisher. On March 3, 1870, Nechayev, writing on behalf of the People's Vengeance sent a threatening letter to Lyubavin demanding that Bakunin be freed of obligations regarding the translation. There is no evidence that Bakunin knew of Nechayev's intentions in this matter but it is consistant with his personality that he would have left arrangements with the publisher to Nechayev's discretion. However, it was in Bakunin's collaboration with Nechayev, the letter to Lyubavin being a particularly incriminating document, that Marx later found a pretext to have Bakunin expelled from the 1st International.

Did I believe out of weakness, out of blindness, or because of stupidity? You know yourself that this is not so. You know very well that I was never given to blind faith. That even last year when we talked alone together, and once at Ogarev's[7] and in his presence, I told you clearly that we ought not to believe you as you were quite capable of lying when you thought that a lie might be useful to the cause. We thus had no other guarantee of the truth of your words but your obvious sincerity and undoubted devotion to the cause. This was an important guarantee which, however, did not save you from mistakes and us from blunders if we follow you blindly.

Despite this conviction of which I spoke to you several times, I stayed in contact with you and helped you everywhere and as much as I could. Do you want to know why I did it?

Firstly, because, up to your departure from Geneva for Russia, our programmes were truly identical. I was convinced of this not only by our daily conversations, but by the fact that all my writings, conceived and printed while you were here, evoked in you a sympathetic response precisely on the points which most clearly expressed our common programme and because your writings, printed last year, bore the same character.

Secondly, because acknowledging your real and indefatigable strength, devotion, passion and power of thought, I considered you, and still consider you, capable of uniting around yourself real forces, not for your own sake but for the cause. I said to myself and to Ogarev that if they are not yet united, they will necessarily be so shortly.

Thirdly, because of all the Russian people whom I knew I considered you the most capable of carrying out this enterprise and I said to myself and to Ogarev that there was no point in waiting for another man, that we were both old and unlikely to meet another man more dedicated and more able than you. That is why, if we want to be allied with the Russian cause, we must be allied with you and with no one else. We do not know your Committee, or your Society, and can form an opinion about them only through you. If you are in earnest, why should your present and future friends not be in earnest

7.Nikolay Platonovich Ogarev (1813-77), a co-editor of Kolokol with his lifelong friend Herzen, was a friend and fellow-exile of Bakunin.

too? Your earnestness was for me a guarantee that, on the one hand you would not admit worthless people to your company and, on the other, that you will not remain alone and will attempt to create a collective force.

You have, it is true, a weak point which astounded me from the first days of our acquaintance and to which, I confess, I did not attach sufficient importance. This is your inexperience, your ignorance of life and people and, associated with this, a fanaticism bordering on mysticism. Your ignorance of the social conditions, customs, morals, ideas and usual feelings of the so-called educated world renders you even now incapable of successful action in this environment even with a view to its destruction. You do not know as yet how to acquire influence and power within it, which is bound to lead to inevitable blunders every time the needs of the cause bring you in contact with it. This was clearly demonstrated in your ill-fated attempt to publish *Kolokol (The Bell)* in impossible conditions. But we shall talk about *Kolokol* later.[9] This ignorance of men leads to inevitable blunders. You demand too much and expect too much from people, giving them tasks beyond their strength in the belief that all people must be filled with the same passion which animates you. At the same time you do not believe in them, and consequently you do not take into consideration the passion which is aroused within them, their orientation, their independently honest devotion to your aim. You try to subdue them, frighten them, to tie them down by external controls which mostly prove to be inadequate, so that once they get into your hands they can never tear themselves free.[9] And at the same time they do escape, and will continue to escape as long as you do not change your behaviour towards them, while you do not look within them for the main reason for joining you. Do you remember how cross you were when I called you an *Abrek*[10] and your catechism a catechism of

6. Nechayev had attempted to restart publication of The Bell earlier that year.

9. Vera Zasulich, the populist revolutionary described Nechayev as a man whose outstanding attributes were hatred and contempt.

10. "Abrek": a Caucasian mountaineer who had sworn an oath of revenge or was outlawed from his clan. Literally, someone who acts fiercely with a sense of despair.



"At present I am engrossed in Russian affairs. Our youth, theoretically and in practice the most revolutionary in the world is in great ferment....I have here with me now one of these young fanatics who know no doubts, who fear nothing and who realise that many of them will perish at the hands of the government but who nevertheless have decided that they will not relebt until the people rise. They are magnificent, these young fanatics. Believers without God and heroes without phrases...."

Bakunin to James Guillaume, shortly after his first meeting with Nechayev in April 1869.

longer. It followed that you systematically lied to us, that your whole enterprise was riddled with rotten lies and was founded on sand. It meant that your Committee consisted of you accounting for at least three-quarters of it, with a following of two, three, or four people who are subordinate to you, or at least under your predominant influence. It meant that the cause to which you had entirely dedicated your life had burst, dissipated in a puff of smoke, as a result of false and stupid orientation, as a result of your Jesuitical system which had corrupted you and, even more, your friends. I loved you deeply and still love you, Nechayev. I firmly, too firmly, believed in you and to see you in such a position, so humiliated in front of the chatterer Lopatin, was inexpressibly bitter to me.

I was also hurt on my own account. Carried away by my faith in you, I gave you my name and publicly espoused your cause. I tried as much as I could to strengthen Ogarev's sympathy towards you and his faith in your cause. I continually advised him to give up to you all the money. I attracted Ozerov to you and spared no efforts in order to persuade Tata to join us, *i.e.* you, and to devote herself wholly to your cause. Finally, against my better judgement, I persuaded Ogarev to agree to publish *Kolokol* according to the wild and impossible programme invented by you. Briefly, having complete faith in you, while you systematically duped me, I turned out to be a complete fool. This is painful and shameful for a man of my experience and my age. Worse than this, I spoilt my situation with regard to the Russian and the International causes.

When Lopatin left, I asked you: Is it possible that he told the truth, that everything you told me was a lie? You evaded an answer. It was late and I left. All the conversations and discussions with Lopatin the following day finally convinced me that Lopatin told the truth. You were silent. I awaited the result of your last talk with Lopatin; you did not tell me about it, but I found it out from Lopatin's letter which Ozerov will read to you.[30]

30.Lopatin's letter to Bakunin of May 26,1870 can be found in M. Confino "Autour de l'affaire Nechayev,lettres inedites de Michel Bakunin et German Lopatin" in Cahiers du Monde Russe et Sovietique, VIII, 1967 no.3,pp. 466-79.

Abreks? You said that all men should be such, that a complete renunciation of self, of all personal wishes, pleasures, feelings, affections and ties, should be a normal, natural, everyday condition of everybody without exception. You wished, and still wish, to make your own selfless cruelty, your own truly extreme fanaticism, into a rule of common life.[11] You wish for an absurdity, an impossibility, a total negation of nature, man, and society. This wish is fatal because it forces you to spend your strength in vain, always shooting to miss. No man, however strong he is, and no society, however perfect its discipline and however powerful its organization, can conquer nature. Only religious fanatics and ascetics could try to conquer it—that is why I was not very surprised, or surprised for long, when I recognized in you a certain mystical, pantheistic idealism. In connection with your characteristic orientation this seemed to me completely obvious, but completely absurd. Yes, dear friend, you are not a materialist like us sinners, but an idealist, a prophet like a monk of the Revolution,[12] your hero should not be Babeuf, not even Marat, but some sort of Savonarola. According to your way of thinking, you are nearer to the Jesuits than to us. You are a fanatic. This is your enormous and peculiar strength. But at the same time this is your blindness, and blindness is a great and fatal weakness; blind energy errs and stumbles, and the more powerful it is, the more inevitable and serious are the blunders. You suffer from an enormous lack of the critical sense without which it is impossible to evaluate people and situations, and to reconcile means with ends.

All this I understood and realized last year. But for me all this was balanced in your favour by two considerations. Firstly, I recognized (and still recognize) in you a great and, one might say, perfectly pure force, free of any admixture of self-love or vanity, such as I had never met in any Russian. Secondly, I told and still tell myself that you are still young and whole-

11 .These convictions of Nechayev are incorporated into Catechism of a Revolutionist.

12.Camus also interpreted Nechayev's character in this way, as: "He made himself the cruel monk of a desperate revolution..." (The Rebel, Part III.)

hearted, and being without personal egoistical whims and self-delusions you cannot long remain on the wrong path and under a delusion which is fatal to the cause. I am still convinced of this.

Finally, I clearly saw and felt that you were far from having full confidence in me and in many respects attempted to use me as a means to immediate aims which were unknown to me. But this did not bother me at all.

Firstly, I liked your silence about the people involved in your organization, and the conviction that in such movements even the most trusted people should know only as much as is *practically* necessary for the success of their particular enterprise. You will do me the justice of admitting that I never asked you indiscreet questions. Even if you had, contrary to your duty, given me some names, I should not have known the people to whom these names belonged.[13] I would have had to judge them on your word, and I believed and believe in you. Composed of people like you who have earned your total trust, the Committee, should, I think, be equally trusted by us.

The question is: Did your organization really exist, or were you only going to create it somehow or other? If it did exist, was it large, did it at least represent an embryo of power, or did this all exist only as a hope? Did our holy of holies, the Committee itself, exist in the shape you described and with the undoubted unity of forces for life or death—or were you only going to create it? In a word, were you the only representative of a quite respectable individual power, or of a collective power already in existence? And if the society and the Central Committee really existed, and assuming the participation in it (particularly in the Committee) of only true, firm, fanatically devoted and selfless people like you, still another question arises: Was, and is, there in it sufficient common sense and knowledge, sufficient theoretical training and ability to understand the conditions and relationships of the Russian people and classes to make the revolutionary Committee effective to cover the whole of Russian life and penetrate all social strata with a really powerful organization? The sincerity of the cause depends on the fervent energy of the participants, its success on their common sense and knowledge.

13.Other evidence suggests that Bakunin did know some of the names and he mentions one of them, Pryzhov, later in the letter.

satisfactory reply.

In May you again started asking me to come to Geneva. I refused several times; finally I came. The last trip confirmed all doubts and completely shook my faith in the honesty and truthfulness of your word. Your conversations with Lopatin in my presence on the evening of my arrival: his direct and sharp accusations, which he made to your face with a conviction which did not permit any doubt as to the veracity of his words—words which showed your statements to be lies. His direct contradiction of all details in the story written by you about your escape.[28] His direct accusations against your dearest friends, accusations of ignoble, even stupid treachery before the commission of inquiry, accusations which were not unsupported but based on their written evidence which (according to him and confirmed by you later) he had a chance to read. In particular, the contempt expressed by him about the completely unnecessary denunciation by Pryzhov,[29] of whom you spoke as being one of your best and firmest friends. Finally, his direct and definite denial of the existence of your Committee which was expressed in the following words:

> N[echayev] can tell the story to you who live outside Russia. However, he will not repeat all this in my presence, knowing full well that I am familiar with all the groups, all the people and all attitudes and facts in Russia. You see that he confirms by his silence the truth of all I say both about his escape, the circumstances of which, as he is aware, are only too well known to me, down to the smallest detail, and I know also about his friends and imaginary Committee.

And in fact you remained silent and did not attempt to defend yourself, or any of your friends, or even the reality of the existence of your Committee.

He triumphed; you retreated before him. I cannot express to you, my dear friend, how hurt I was both for your sake and for mine. I could not doubt the truth of Lopatin's words any

28.Nechayev's story was that he had escaped from Moscow's Peter and Paul Fortress.

29.Ivan Gavrilovich Pryzhov (1827-85), writer and associate of Nechayev.

heard from you that Natalya Alexeevna had slandered me, maintaining that I had designs on Tata's pocket and saw that Tata herself was doubtful, not knowing whether this was true, I withdrew from her decisively.

By the way, you insisted several times that you heard from Tata herself that Natalya Alexeevna[25] and Tchorzewski[26] claim everywhere, shout and write to everybody, that I want to exploit Tata's financial resources. Natalya Alexeevna and Tchorzewski, on the contrary, maintain that they have never written and said it, and Tata herself confirmed this. During your last visit to Geneva you told me that you heard from Serebrennikov (Semen)[27] that Zhukovsky had told him that I exploit Tata. I asked Serebrennikov and found out that Zhukovsky said that not about me, but about you. You also told me that Zhukovsky's wife tried to persuade you to join Utin, assuring you that an alliance with me was useless, impossible, and harmful. She maintains the contrary: she did not speak about me to you; she did not invite you to join Utin with whom she herself had more or less broken, and that you, not she, proposed that you find funds to achieve this alliance and she was waiting to receive these funds from you.

You see how many unnecessary, stupid lies there are, and how easily they are revealed. Yes, I must confess that my first visit to Geneva had already disappointed me and undermined my faith in the possibility of a firm alliance and common action with you. In addition, not a sensible word was said between us about the business for which I was summoned and solely for which I came to Geneva. Several times I started a discussion about the foreign bureau; you avoided it, awaiting some sort of final answer from the Committee, which never arrived. Finally, I left, having sent through you a letter to the Committee in which I demanded a clear definition and explanation of the business for which I was summoned, firmly intending not to return to Geneva unless I had received a

25. Nathalie Alexeevna Tuchkova-Ogareva (1829-1923), Ogarev's wife who had lived with Herzen from 1857, now lived in Geneva.

26. Stanislaw Tchorzewski, polish exile and friend of Herzen.

27. Semen Ivanovich Serebrennikov, student and printer, colaborated with Nechayev in 1868.

In order to discover this both as regards actual and potential development, *i.e.* in the spirit of your movement, I asked you many questions and I must confess that your replies did not satisfy me in the least. However much you wriggled and dodged, you told me, in spite of yourself, that your society was still numerically insignificant and lacked funds. It had as yet very little common sense, knowledge and skill. But the Committee is created by you and certainly from people like you, among whom you are one of the best and most determined. You are the creator and, up to now, leader of the society. All this, dear friend, I understood and learned last year. But this did not in any way prevent me from joining you, recognizing in you an intelligent and passionately devoted activist of a sort which is rare, and being certain that you had managed to find at least a few people like you and unite with them. Also I was, and still am, certain that with experience and sincere and tireless aspiration you would soon achieve that knowledge, wisdom and skill without which no success is possible. And as I did not, and do not now, suppose that there can exist in Russia in addition to your group another group as much in earnest as yours, I decided, in spite of everything, to remain united with you.

I did not hold it against you that you always tried to exaggerate your strength to me. This is an objective, often useful and sometimes bold gesture of all conspirators. It is true that I saw your attempts to deceive me as a proof of your as yet insufficient knowledge of people. It seemed to me that from our talks you ought to have understood that in order to attract me there was no need to furnish proof of an already existing and organized power, but only proof of an unbending and reasonable determination to create such a power. I also understood that you were appearing before me as if you were an envoy of an existing and fairly powerful organization. Thus, it seemed to you, you put yourself into a position to present your conditions as emanating from great power, while you actually appeared before me as a person who was in the process of collecting strength. You should have talked to me as an equal, person to person, and submit for my [approval] your programme and [plan] of action.[14]

14. Illegible in original manuscript.

But this did not enter into your calculations. You were too fanatically devoted to your plan and your programme to subject them to criticism by anyone. And secondly you did not have enough faith in my devotion to the cause, in my understanding of it, to show me the cause as it really was. You were sceptical about all *émigrés*, and you were right. About me you were probably less sceptical than about others, because I gave you too many proofs of my readiness to serve the cause without any personal demands or vainglorious calculations. But you still considered me as an invalid whose counsels and knowledge might sometimes be useful, but no more; whose participation in your fervent efforts would have been superfluous and even harmful. I saw this very well but it did not offend me. You knew this could not prompt me to break with you. It was not my business to prove to you that I was not such a hopelessly unfit case for an ardent, a real movement as you thought. I left it (and leave it) to time and your own experience to convince you of the contrary.

At the same time there existed, and still exists, a special circumstance which forced and forces me to be particularly careful in relation to all Russian affairs and people. This is my total lack of funds. I have struggled with poverty all my life, and every time I have managed to undertake and do something more or less useful, I had to do it not with my own, but with other people's money. For a long time it has drawn down on me a whole cloud of slander and reproach, particularly from Russian blackguards.

These fellows have totally besmirched my reputation and thus paralysed my activities to a considerable extent. I needed all the genuine passion and sincere determination which I recognize in myself, from experience and not boastfully, to prevent me from breaking and discontinuing my activities. You also know how untrue and ignoble are the rumours about my personal luxury, about my attempts to make a fortune at the expense of others and by duping them. In spite of this, the Russian *émigré* blackguards, Utin and Co, dare to call me a swindler and a self-seeking exploiter, me, who ever since I can remember have never lived or wanted to live for my own pleasure and have always striven for the liberation of others. Do not take this as boasting—I tell *it to you* and to friends. I feel that it is necessary and right to say it to you once and for all.

but Zhukovsky has an instinct for honesty which rebelled. He told me everything that you told him about me, told it with indignation and scorn and had I been a vainer and weaker man this would have been enough for me to break my connection with you. You will remember that I contented myself with faithfully repeating to you Zhukovsky's words without comment. You did not reply, and I did not think it necessary to continue this discussion. Then you started to explain to Zhukovsky your favourite state-communist and police-Jesuit theories, and this finally estranged him from you. Finally, there was this unfortunate gossip by Henry,[23] and Zhukovsky became your bitter and irreconcilable foe, not only your foe but almost mine as well. And he might have been useful in spite of all his weaknesses.

I must also confess, dear friend, that your system of blackmailing, entangling and scaring Tata[24] was extremely repugnant to me and I told you about this several times. The result was that you instilled in her a deep suspicion towards all of us and a conviction that you and I intended to exploit [her] financial resources and to exploit them, of course, for ourselves and not for the cause. Tata is a truly honest and truthful person incapable, it seems to me, of giving herself completely to anyone or anything, therefore a dilettante if not by nature then by perception, an intellectual and moral dilettante, whose word, however, one can trust and who is capable of being, if not our friend, at least a true well-wisher. She should have been treated in a straightforward and honest manner, without resorting to the tricks which you think are your strength, but which in fact show your weakness. While I considered it possible and useful to speak to her directly and openly to try to influence her free convictions, I did so. I did not wish to go any further with you in this matter as I found it repugnant. As soon as I

23.Referred to is Henry Sutherland, son of the woman with whom Ogarev lived, Mary Sutherland. What the "gossip" was is unknown.

24.Tata was the nickname of Herzen's oldest daughter, Natalie (1844-1936). During this period she acted as archivist for the group of Russian exiles in Geneva associated with Bakunin.and it was among her papers that this letter was found. She hesitated to commit herself to radical activism, finally withdrawing completely largely due to her repugnance at Nechayev's methods.

You could have done a lot of useful things in Geneva with this modest sum in your hands and with the help of a few people who met you with complete sincerity and expressed their readiness to serve the common cause without demands or claims, without vanity or ambition. You could have set up a serious organ with an avowed social-revolutionary programme and, attached to it, a foreign bureau for the management of Russian activities outside Russia and in a certain, though not absolute but positive [. . .][22] to it. Your Committee, *i.e.* you, invited me to Geneva for this purpose for the first time. What did I find in Geneva? First of all, a mangled programme for *Kolokol* on which the Committee and you made simply absurd and impossible demands. Do you know, I simply cannot forgive my weakness in yielding to you on this question – I have to answer for this poor *Kolokol* and for solidarity with you to all my international friends, thanks on the one hand to Utin and on the other to Zhukovsky, the first of whom slanders me and you maliciously, and the second good-humouredly.

By the way, about Zhukovsky. You demonstrated with regard to him your complete ignorance and your incomprehension of people, your inability to attract them in a straightforward, honest, firm way to your cause. Knowing him intimately, I have described his character to you in detail, his abilities and ineptitudes, so that it should not have been difficult for you to establish serious relations with him. I described him to you as a very kind and able man, far from stupid, although without any intellectual initiative, accepting all ideas at second hand and capable of popularizing them or chattering about them fairly eloquently, not so much on paper as in conversation. As a man of artistic sensibility fairly firmly committed to a certain orientation, but without much character, in the sense that he does not like danger, he bows before strong contradiction and easily succumbs to all sorts of influences. In a word, he is a man very capable of being a conductor of propaganda, but completely incapable of being a member of a secret society. You ought to have believed me, but did not do so; and instead of attracting Zhukovsky to our cause, alienated him from you and from me. You tried to enlist and ensnare him, and having ensnared him, to make him your slave. To do this you started to scold and ridicule me;

22.Word(s) missing in original.

It is clear that in order to devote myself fully to the service of the cause, I must have the means to live. I am getting old. Eight years of imprisonment have led to a chronic illness and my impaired health demands certain care and certain conditions so that I can usefully serve the cause. I also have a wife and children whom I cannot condemn to death by starvation. I try to reduce expenses to the minimum, but I still cannot exist without a certain monthly sum. Where can I get this sum if I give all my labour to the common cause?

There is another consideration. Having founded some years ago the secret International Revolutionary Union, I cannot and will not abandon it in order to devote myself entirely to the Russian cause. And besides, in my opinion, the international and the Russian cause are one and the same. Up to now the international cause did not provide me with the means of existence, but only involved me in expense. This, in a few words, is the key to my situation. You will understand that this poverty on the one hand, and ignoble slander spread about me by the Russian *émigrés* on the other, hamper me in relation to all new people and to all my activities. You see how many reasons there were not to foist myself upon you, not to demand your trust to a greater extent than you deemed useful; to wait until you and your friends should finally be convinced of the possibility, the usefulness, and the necessity of trust.

At the same time I saw and felt very keenly that in approaching me not as an equal, not as a trusting person or a trustworthy one, you considered me, according to your system and obeying so to say the logic of necessity, a three-quarters blind but experienced instrument for the cause and used my name and my activity as a means. Thus, in fact, lacking the power which you pretended to have, you used my name in order to create power in Russia. So that many people do in fact think that I stand at the head of a secret society about which, as you are aware, I know nothing.

Should I have allowed my name to be used as a means of propaganda and in order to attract people into an organization whose plans and immediate aims were three-quarters unknown to me? Without hesitation I reply in the affirmative, yes, I could and should. Here are my reasons:

Firstly, I was always convinced that the Russian Revolutionary Committee could and should act only within Russia, and it is an absurdity to lead the Russian revolution from abroad.

If you and your friends remained abroad for a long time, I should have proclaimed you incapable of remaining members of the Committee. If you become *émigrés*, you will have, as I have had, to accept orders, as far as any Russian movement is concerned, from the undisputed leadership of a new Committee in Russia recognized by you on the basis of mutually discussed programmes and plans; while you yourself would have to create a Russian Committee Abroad for independent management of all Russian relations, activities, individuals and groups abroad, in full agreement with the views of the Russian Committee, but with suitable autonomy in the choice of men and methods of action and, most important, in complete agreement with the International Union. In such a case I would demand, as my duty and right, full membership of this Russian Committee Abroad, which I did, by the way, in my last letter to the Committee and to you,[22] recognizing the fact that the Russian Committee must be within Russia itself. Obviously I did not wish, nor was I able, to return to Russia, and so do not desire to be a member of that. I got to know its programme and the general aims of its activity through you. I was in full agreement with you and expressed my readiness and my firm resolution to help and serve it by all means available to me. Since *you* considered my name useful for attracting new people into *your* organization, I gave you my name. I knew that it would be used for the cause and our common programme and that your character was a guarantee of this, and was not afraid that, as a consequence of mistakes and blunders, I might be generally condemned—I am used to insults.

However, you remember that last summer we agreed that all Russian efforts and persons abroad should be known to me, and nothing that was done or undertaken abroad should be done without my knowledge and consent. This was an essential condition. Firstly, because I know the world abroad much better than any of you and, secondly, because a blind and dependent solidarity with you in actions and publications abroad might conflict with my duties and rights as a member of the International Union. This condition, as we shall see, was not carried out by you and if *it is not going to be* carried out *completely*, I shall be forced to break off all intimate political relations with you.[23]

15.This letter is lost. 16.Part of the original text missing.

so that they should be your slaves. At the same time you do it so clumsily, so awkwardly and carelessly, so rashly and inconsiderately, that all your deceits, perfidies, and cunning are exposed very quickly. You have fallen so much in love with Jesuit methods that you have forgotten everything else. You have even forgotten the aim which led you to them, the passionate desire for the people's liberation. You have fallen so much in love with Jesuit methods that you are prepared to preach their necessity to anybody, even to Zhukovsky.[20] You even wanted to write about them, to fill *Kolokol (The Bell)* with these theories—reminding one of Suvorov's saying, "Thank goodness, he is not cunning whom everybody knows to be cunning." Briefly, you are playing with Jesuit methods as a child plays with a doll or Utin at Revolution.

Now let us have a look at what you have achieved and have had time to do in Geneva thanks to your Jesuit system. You were given the Bakhmetev fund.[21] This is the only real result which you have achieved. But Ogarev gave it to you and I warmly advised that you should be given it, not because you played the Jesuit with us, but because we felt and recognized in you, in addition to your far-from-clever Jesuitism, a man who is deeply, warmly, and earnestly devoted to the Russian cause. But you know—this is a bitter confession for me—I almost repent that I advised Ogarev to give you the fund. Not because I could think that you might use it dishonestly or for your own advantage—saints preserve me from such an ignoble and simply inept thought! I am prepared to answer with my life that you will never use one penny more than necessary for yourself. No, I begin to repent because, observing your actions, I have stopped believing in your political wisdom, in the earnestness and the reality of your Committee and your whole society. The sum is not large, but it is the only one and it will disappear in vain, uselessly, and wantonly in mad and impossible activities.

20.Nikolay Ivanovich Zhukovsky (1833-95),exiled revolutionary and member of the 1st International who founded with Bakunin the Alliance Internationale de la Democratie Socialiste.

21.In 1857, P.A. Bakhmetev, a young landowner, had donated 20,000 francs towards the printing of radical propaganda, giving it in care to Herzen and Ogarev.

and idle parliamentary debate—sincerity and mutual trust, real solidarity, as the only moralizing unifying elements.

The whole society constitute's one body and a firmly united whole, led by the C.C. and engaged in unceasing underground struggle against the government and against other societies either inimical to it or even those acting independently of it. Where there is war, there is politics, and there inescapably arises the necessity for violence, cunning, and deceit.

Societies[26] whose aims are near to ours must be forced to merge with our society or, at least, must be subordinated to it without their knowledge, while harmful people must be removed from them. Societies which are inimical or positively harmful must be dissolved, and finally the government must be destroyed. All this cannot be achieved only be propagating the truth; cunning, diplomacy, deceit are necessary. Jesuit methods or even entanglement can be used for this—entanglement is a necessary and marvellous means for demoralizing and destroying the enemy, though *certainly not*[27] a useful means of obtaining and attracting a new friend.

Thus this simple law must be the basis of our activity: truth, honesty, mutual trust between all Brothers and towards any man who is capable of becoming and whom you would wish to become a Brother—lies, cunning, entanglement, and, if necessary, violence towards enemies. In this way you will moralize, strengthen, and unite your own people and destroy the strength of others.

You, my dear friend—and this is a terrible mistake—have become fascinated by the system of Loyola and Machiavelli, the first of whom intended to enslave the whole of mankind, and the second to create a powerful state (whether monarchist or republican is of no importance, it would equally lead to the enslavement of the people). Having fallen in love with police and Jesuitical principles and methods, you intended to base on them your own organization, your secret collective power, so to say, the heart and soul of your whole society. You therefore treat your friends as you treat your enemies, with cunning and lies, try to divide them, even to foment quarrels, so that they should not be able to unite against your tutelage. You look for strength not in their unity but in their disunity and do not trust them at all. You try to collect damning facts or letters (which frequently you have read without having the right to do so, and which are even stolen), and try to entangle them in every way,

To begin with, my views are different in that they do not acknowledge the usefulness, or even the possibility, of any revolution except a spontaneous or a people's social revolution. I am deeply convinced that any other revolution is dishonest, harmful, and spells death to liberty and the people. It dooms them to new penury and new slavery. But the main point is that



"Lockout" (*drawing by Théophile Steinlen; signed "Petit Pierre"*)

any other revolution has now become impossible and unattainable. Centralization and civilization; railways, the telegraph, new arms and new military organization; in general the techniques of administration, *i.e.*, the science of systematic enslavement and exploitation of the masses of the people; and the science and suppression of people's and all other riots, carefully worked out, tested by experiment and perfected in the last seventy-five years of contemporary history—all this has at present armed the state with such enormous power that all

contrived secret conspiracies and non-popular attempts, sudden attacks, surprises and coups—are bound to be shattered against it. It can only be conquered by a spontaneous people's revolution.

Thus the sole aim of a secret society must be, not the creation of an artificial power outside the people, but the rousing, uniting and organizing of the spontaneous power of the people; therefore, the only possible, the only real revolutionary army is not outside the people, it is the people itself. It is impossible to arouse the people artificially. People's revolutions are born from the course of events, or from historical currents which, continuously and usually slowly, flow underground and unseen within the popular strata, increasingly embracing, penetrating, and undermining them, until they emerge from the ground and their turbulent waters break all barriers and destroy everything that impedes their course.

Such a revolution cannot be artificially induced. It is even impossible to hasten it, although I have no doubt that an efficient and intelligent organization can facilitate the explosion. There are historical periods when revolutions are simply impossible; there are other periods when they are inevitable. In which of the two periods are we today? I am deeply convinced that we are in a period of a general, inevitable popular revolution. I will refrain from proving the truth of this conviction because this will lead me too far. Furthermore, it is unnecessary for me to prove it as I address a man and people who, I think, fully share this conviction. I maintain that a popular social revolution is inevitable everywhere within Europe as a whole. Will it catch fire soon and where first? In Russia, or in France, or elsewhere in the West? Nobody can foretell. Perhaps it will blaze up in a year's time, or even earlier, or perhaps in ten or twenty years. This does not matter, and the people who intend to serve it honestly, do not serve for their own pleasure. All secret societies who wish to be really useful to it must, first of all, renounce all nervousness, all impatience. They must not sleep; on the contrary, they must be as ready as possible every minute of the time, alert and always capable of seizing every opportunity. But, at the same time, they must be harnessed and organized, not with a view to an imminent rising, but aiming at long and patient underground work, taking as an example your friends the Jesuit Fathers.

tion, likewise from the District, Regional, and People's Fraternities. The strength of the whole society, as well as the morality, loyalty, energy and dedication of each member, is based exclusively and totally on the shared truth, sincerity and trust, and on the open fraternal control of all over each one.

Here you have the main outline of a plan for the society such as I conceive it to be. Obviously this plan must be developed, supplemented, and sometimes altered according to circumstances and the character of the environment and should be defined much more clearly. But I am convinced that its essence must remain, if you wish to create a real collective power which is capable of serving the cause of people's liberation and not initiate a new exploitation of the people.

The system of entanglement and of Jesuitical lies is totally excluded from this plan as being harmful, divisive, and corrupting principle and means. But parliamentary chatter and ambitious fussiness are also excluded. Strong discipline of all members in their relations with the Committees and all individual Committees in their relation with the C.C. are retained. The right of judgement and control over members belongs to Fraternities and not to Committees. New executive power is in the hands of the Committees. The right of judgement over Committees, including the Central, is the province of the People's Fraternity alone.

According to my plan the People's Fraternity will never consist of more than fifty to seventy members. At first it will probably consist of ten men or even less and will grow slowly, accepting one man after another, submitting each one to the strictest and most thorough study and, if possible, accepting him only with the unanimous consent of all members of the People's Fraternity; but in any case not less than three-quarters of the Fraternity. It is impossible that in the course of two or three years thirty or forty men cannot be found who would be capable of being People's Brothers.

Imagine the People's Fraternity for the whole of Russia consisting of forty, at most of seventy members. In addition there would be some hundreds of members belonging to the second tier of the organization. Regional Brothers—and you have covered the whole of Russia with a mighty net. Your staff is set up. One has, as mentioned, assured within it—in addition to strict caution and the exclusion of all chatter, all ambitious

the Committee's orders and call the Committee to judgement before the general meeting of the People's Fraternity. If the general meeting is discontented with the Committee, it can always substitute another one for it.

12. Any member and any group is subject to judgement by the general meeting of the People's Fraternity.

13. Since each Brother knows everything and knows even the personnel of the Committee, the acceptance of a new member among them must be conducted with extreme caution, difficulties and obstacles. One bad choice can ruin everything. No new Brother can be accepted without the consent of all or at the very least three-quarters of all the members of the People's Fraternity.

14. The Committee divides the members of the Fraternity among the Regions and constitutes Regional groups of leaderships from them. This leadership could consist of one Brother alone, if there are too few members.

15. Regional leadership is charged with organizing the second tier of the society—the *Regional Fraternity*, on the basis of the same programme, the same rules, and the same revolutionary plan.

16. All members of the *Regional Fraternity* know each other, but do not know of the existence of the *People's Fraternity*. They only know that there exists a *Central Committee* which hands down to them their orders for execution through *Regional Committee* which has been set up by it, *i.e.* by the *Central Committee*.

17. As far as possible the Regional Committee is composed exclusively of People's Brothers appointed and replaced by the Central Committee, with at least one People's Brother. In such a case this Brother, with the consent of the C.C., will appoint the two best members of the Regional Fraternity to act jointly with himself as a Regional Committee; but these will not have equal membership rights in so far as only the People's Brother will be in contact with the C.C. whose orders he will pass on to his comrades of the Regional Committee.

18. People's Brothers or Brothers in the regions will seek out from among members of the Regional Fraternity people capable and worthy of being admitted to the People's Fraternity, and will introduce them through the C.C. to the general meeting of the People's Fraternity.

19. Each Regional Committee will set up *District* Committees from members of *Regional Fraternity* and will appoint and replace them.

20. District Committees can, if necessary and only with the consent of the Regional Committee, set up a third tier of the organization—*District Fraternity* with a programme and regulations as near as possible to the general programme and regulations of the People's Fraternity. The programme and regulations of the District Fraternity will not come into force until they are discussed and passed by the general meeting of the Regional Fraternity and have been confirmed by the Regional Committee.

21. Jesuitical control and a system of entanglement by police methods and lies are totally excluded from all three tiers of the secret organiza-

I will confine my considerations to Russia. When will the Russian revolution break out? We do not know. Many, and I a sinner among them, expected a people's rising in 1870, but the people did not awake. Must we conclude that the Russian people can do without the revolution, that it will pass them by? No, this conclusion is impossible; it would be nonsense. Whoever knows the desperate, indeed critical condition of our people economically and politically and, on the other hand, the absolute incapacity of our government and our state not only to alter it, but to ameliorate it at all, an incapacity stemming not from one or another characteristic of the individuals in our government, but from the very essence of any government structure and our government in particular, must conclude that the Russian people's revolution is inevitable. It is not only negatively but positively inevitable, because our people, in spite of its ignorance, has historically arrived at an ideal which it strives, consciously or not, to achieve. This ideal is the common ownership of land with freedom from state oppression and all extortion. The people tried to achieve this under the False Dimitris, under Stenka Razin, and under Pugachev, and still tries by means of continual riots which are, however, scattered and therefore always suppressed.

I have merely pointed out the two main features of the Russian people's ideal and do not claim to describe it fully in a few words. One does not know what else exists in the intellectual aspirations of the Russian people and what will emerge in the light of day with the first revolution. At the moment it suffices for me to prove that our land is not a blank page on which any secret society can write whatever it wishes—for instance, say, your Communist Programme. It has worked out, partly consciously, probably three-quarters unconsciously, its own programme which the secret society must get to know or guess and to which it would have to adapt itself if it wants to succeed.

It is an indisputable and well-known fact that under Stenka Razin and also under Pugachev, every time the people's rising succeeded for a while, the people did one thing only: they took all the land into common ownership, sent the land-owning gentry and the Tsar's government officials, sometimes the clergy as well, to the devil and organized its own free commune. This means that our people holds in its memory

and as its ideal one precious element which the Western people do not possess, that is, *a free economic community*. In our people's life and thought there are two principles, two facts on which we can build: frequent riots and a free economic community. There is a third principle, a third fact, this is the Cossacks and the world of brigands and thieves which includes both protest against oppression by the state and by the patriarchal society and incorporates, so to say, the first two features.

Frequent riots, although they are always provoked by accidental circumstances, nevertheless stem from general causes and express the deep and general dissatisfaction of the people. They constitute, in a way, an everyday and customary phenomenon of the Russian people's life. There is no village in Russia which is not deeply discontented with its condition, which does not experience poverty, overcrowding, oppression, and which does not hide, in the depth of its



INSURGENT UKRAINE.
UKRAINIAN PEASANT: "You want my bread? Here's bread for you!"
(Signed: *Pugachev*)

at a general meeting and in his presence. *General fraternal control* of each other, a control which should not be captious or petty and above all not malicious. This type of control must take the place of your system of Jesuitical control and must become a moral education, a support for the moral strength of each member. It must be the basis of *mutual fraternal trust* on which rests all the internal and, therefore, external power of the society.

4. All weak-nerved, cowardly, ambitious and self-seeking people are excluded from the society. They can be used as weapons by the society without their knowledge, but on no account must they belong to its nucleus.

5. In joining the society, every member condemns himself for ever to be socially unknown and insignificant. All his energy and all his intelligence belong to the society and must be directed not to the creation of personal social strength, but to the collective strength of the organization. Each must be convinced that personal influence is powerless and fruitless and that only collective strength can overcome the common enemy and achieve the common positive aim. Therefore collective passion must gradually be substituted for personal passions within each member.

6. Everyone's personal intelligence vanishes like a river in the sea in the collective intelligence and all members obey unconditionally the decisions of the latter.

7. All members are equal; they know all their comrades and discuss and decide with them all the most important and essential questions bearing on the programme of the society and the progress of the cause. The decision of the general meeting is absolute law.

8. In principle each member has the right to know everything. But idle curiosity is forbidden in the society as is aimless talk about the business and aims of the secret society. Knowing the general programme and the general direction of affairs, no member asks or tries to find out details which are not needed for better execution of that part of the enterprise with which he is entrusted and, if it is not necessary in practice, will not talk with any of his comrades about it.

9. The society chooses an Executive Committee from among their number consisting of three or five members who should organize the branches of the society and manage its activities in all the regions of the Empire on the basis of the programme and general plan of action adopted by the decision of the society as a whole.

10. This Committee is elected for an indefinite term. If the society—I shall call it the People's Fraternity—if the People's Fraternity is satisfied with the actions of the Committee, it will be left as such; and while it remains a Committee each member of the People's Fraternity and each regional group have to obey it unconditionally, except for such cases where the orders of the Committee contradict either the general programme of the principal rules, or the general revolutionary plan of action, which are known to everybody as all the Brothers have participated equally in the discussion of them.

11. In such a case members of the group must halt the execution of

than enough. I am deeply convinced that you yourself, in spite of all blunders, regrettable and harmful mistakes, in spite of a series of disgusting petty and stupid deceits, into which you were drawn only by a false system, not by ambition, vanity, or self-interest, as many, too many people begin to believe, you with whom I would be obliged to break and have resolved to do so if you do not renounce this system—you belong to the number of these rare people. *This is the only reason for my love for you, my faith in you in spite of everything, and my patience with you, a patience which, however, is now exhausted.* In addition to all your terrible shortcomings and abortive thinking, I recognized and continue to recognize in you an intelligent, strong and energetic man, capable of cold calculation and, be it from inexperience, ignorance, and frequently from false argument, capable also of complete self-denial. A man passionately and wholly devoted and consecrated to the cause of popular liberation.

Renounce your system and you will become a valuable man; if, however, you do not wish to renounce it, you will certainly become a harmful militant, highly destructive not to the state but to the cause of liberty. But I very much hope that the latest events in Russia and abroad have opened your eyes and that you will want and understand the necessity of joining hands with us on a basis of sincerity. In that case, I repeat, we shall acknowledge you as a valuable man and will gladly recognize you as our leader for all Russian activities. But if you are as I described, then surely there will be found in Russia at least ten people like you. If they have not yet been found, look for them and set up a new society with them on the following principles and mutual conditions:

1. To adopt fully, wholly and passionately the above-mentioned programme in *The People's Cause (Narodnoe Delo)*, with additions and clarifications which seem necessary to you.

2. Equality among all members and their unconditional and absolute solidarity—one for all and all for one—with the obligation for each and everyone to help each other, support and save each other to the uttermost, in as much as it is possible without danger of annihilation to the society itself.

3. Complete frankness among members and proscription of any Jesuitical methods in their relationship, of all ignoble distrust, all perfidious control, of spying and mutual accusations, the absence and a positive strict prohibition of all tattling behind members' backs. When a member has to say anything against another member, this must be done

collective heart, the desire to seize all the land belonging to the landlords and then that of the richer peasants *(kulaks)*, and the conviction that this is its indubitable right. There is no village which, with skill, cannot be induced to revolt. If the villages do not revolt more often, this is due to fear or to a realization of their weakness. This awareness comes from the disunity of peasant communes, from the lack of real solidarity among them. If each village knew that when it rises all others will rise, one could say for certain that there is no village in Russia which would not revolt. Hence it follows that the first duty, purpose and aim of a secret organization is to awaken in all peasant communities a realization of their inevitable solidarity and thus to arouse the Russian people to a consciousness of their power—in other words, to merge the multitude of private peasant revolts into one general all-people's revolt.

One of the main means for the achievement of this aim, I am deeply convinced, must and should be our free Cossacks, our innumerable saintly and not so saintly tramps *(brodiagi)*, pilgrims, members of *"beguny"* sects,[17] thieves, and brigands—this whole wide and numerous underground world which from time immemorial has protested against the state and statism and against the Teutonic civilization of the whip. This was expressed in the anonymous broadsheet *Statement of the Revolutionary Question* which provoked a howl of indignation from all our vainglorious chatterers who take their doctrinaire Byzantine words for deeds.[18] This, however, is quite correct and is confirmed by all our history. The world of Cossacks, thieves, brigands and tramps played the role of a catalyst and unifier of separate revolts under Stenka Razin and under Pugachev. The tramping fraternity are the best and truest conductors of people's revolution, promoters of general popular unrest, this precursor of popular revolt. Who does not know that tramps, given the opportunity, easily turn into thieves and brigands?

17. The Beguny or Straniki were orthodox sects founded in 18th century Russia who believed that Antichrist ruled the world and that the Russian Tzars were his personification. They believed that all laws were unsupportable by true believers and were persecuted.

18. Bakunin refers to Utin and the Marxist group controlling Narodnoe Delo.

In fact, who among us in Russia is not a brigand and a thief? Is it perhaps the government? Or our official and private speculators and fixers? Or our landowners and our merchants? For myself, I cannot tolerate either brigandage or thieving, nor any other anti-human violence. But I confess, if I had to choose between the brigandage and thieving of those occupying the throne and enjoying all privileges, and popular thieving and brigandage, I would, without hesitation, take the side of the latter. I find it natural, necessary, and even, in some sense, legal. I must confess that the popular world of brigands is far from beautiful from the truly human point of view. But what is beautiful in Russia? Can anything be dirtier than our respectably official or civilized bourgeois and decent world, which hides under its smooth Western form the most horrible depravity of thought, feelings, relationships and deeds, or at best a joyless and inescapable emptiness! On the other hand, the people's depravity is natural, forceful and vital. By sacrifice over many centuries the people have earned the right to it. It is a mighty protest against the root cause of all depravity and against the state and, therefore, contains the seeds of the future. That is why I am on the side of popular brigandage and see in it one of the most essential tools for the future people's revolution in Russia.

I understand that this could enrage our scrupulous or even unscrupulous idealists--idealists of all colours from Utin to Lopatin, who imagine that they can force on the people their ideas, their will, and their mode of action through an artificial secret organization. I do not believe in this possibility and am convinced that as soon as the All-Russian state is destroyed, from wherever this destruction comes, the people will rise not for Utin's, or Lopatin's, or even for *your* ideal, but for *their own*, that no artificial conspiratorial force will be capable of containing or even altering its *native* movement—as no dam can contain a turbulent ocean. You, my friends, will be sent flying like chips of wood, if you cannot swim with the popular current. I am certain that with the first big popular revolt, the world of tramps, thieves and brigands, which is firmly imbedded in our life and constitutes one of its essential manifestations, will be on the move and will move powerfully and not weakly.

Be it good or bad, it is an indisputable and inevitable fact, and whoever really wishes for a Russian popular revolution,

both sides, the positive and the negative, are closely connected in it. Hate, the negative side alone, does not create anything, does not even create the power necessary for destruction and thus destroys nothing. The positive side alone will not destroy anything since the creation of the new is impossible without the destruction of the old, and will not create anything, remaining always a doctrinaire dream or a dreaming doctrine.

Deep passion which cannot be uprooted or shaken is, therefore, the foundation of everything. Without it, even if he is the wisest of men, if he is the most honest of men, he would not have the strength to carry on to the end the fight against the terrible socio-political power which oppresses us all. He would not have the strength to withstand all the difficulties, possibilities, and (most of all) the disappointments which await him and which he will meet without fail in this unequal and daily struggle. A passionless man would not have the strength, faith, or initiative; he would not have the courage; and this business cannot be carried out without courage. But passion alone is not enough. Passion engenders energy, but energy without sensible guidance is fruitless and absurd. Allied to passion there must be reason, cold, calculating, real and practical, but also based on theory, educated by knowledge and experience, wide-ranging but not overlooking details, capable of understanding and discerning people, capable of grasping the realities, relationships and conditions of social life in all strata of society and in all their manifestations, in their true aspect and sense and not arbitrarily and in a dream, as is often done by my friend, namely, you. Finally, it is necessary to know well both Russia and Europe and the real social and political situation in both. Thus passion, while always remaining the basic element, must be led by reason and knowledge, must not rush aimlessly about but, without losing its inward fire, its fervent inexorability, must become cold and thereby much stronger.

Here is the ideal of the conspirator destined to be a member of the nucleus of the secret organization.

You will ask, where are we to find these people, are there many of them in Russia, or even in the whole of Europe? The point is that according to my system not many are needed. Remember that you do not have to create an army but a revolutionary staff. You might find possibly ten such people who are nearly ready, perhaps fifty or sixty capable of becoming such men and preparing themselves for this role —this is more

towards a general plan which has been fully agreed and defined beforehand. This plan for the organization of the people's liberty must firstly be firmly and clearly delineated as regards its main principles and aims in order to exclude any possibility of misunderstanding and deviation by its members who will be called upon to help in its realization. Secondly, it must be sufficiently wide and human to embrace and take in all the inescapable changes which arise from differing circumstances, all varied movements arising from the variety of national life.

Thus the problem is at present how to organize from elements which we know and to which we have access this secret collective dictatorship and strength—which could, firstly, disseminate at present a wide popular propaganda, a propaganda which would *really* penetrate among the people, and by the power of this propaganda and by *organization within the people itself* unite the divided strength of the people into a mighty force which could break the state—and, secondly, which is capable of remaining in being in the midst of revolution itself without breaking apart or altering its direction on the morrow of the people's liberation.

This organization, particularly its basic nucleus, must be composed of persons who are most determined, *most intelligent and as far as possible knowledgeable*, i.e. *intelligent by experience*, who are passionately and undeviatingly devoted, who have, as far as possible, renounced all personal interests and have renounced once and for all, for life, or for death itself, all that attracts people, all material comforts and delights, all satisfaction of ambition, status, and fame. They must be totally and wholly absorbed by one passion, the people's liberation. They must be persons who would renounce personal historical importance while they are alive and even a name in history after their death.

Such complete self-denial is only possible in the presence of passion. It cannot be arrived at by a consciousness of absolute duty, but even less by a system of external control, of restriction and compulsion. Passion alone can bring about this miracle within a man, this strength without effort. Where does passion come from, and how does it arise in a man? It comes from life and arises through an interaction of life and thought; negatively, as a protest hating all that exists and oppresses; positively, in the society of people of the same mind and with the same feelings, as a collective creation of a new ideal. Nevertheless, one must point out that this passion is only real and salutary when

wants to serve it, help it, organize it, not on paper only but in deed, must know this. Moreover, he must take this fact into account and not try to avoid it; he must establish conscious and practical relations with it and be able to use it as a powerful instrument for the triumph of the revolution. It is no use being too scrupulous about it. He who wishes to retain his ideal and virginal purity should stay in the study, dream, think, write discourses or poetry. He who wants to be a real revolutionary in Russia must take off his gloves; no gloves will save him from the deep and all-embracing Russian mud. The Russian world, both privileged state and popular, is a terrible world. A Russian revolution will certainly be a terrible revolution. Whoever is frightened of horrors or dirt should turn away from this world and this revolution. He who wants to serve the latter must know what he is facing, must strengthen his nerves, and be prepared for anything.

It is not easy to use the world of brigandage as a weapon of the people's revolution, as a catalyst of separate popular revolts; I recognize the necessity, but, at the same time, am fully conscious of my incapacity for this task. In order to undertake it and bring it to a conclusion, one must be equipped with strong nerves, the strength of a giant, passionate conviction, and iron will. You might find such people in your ranks. But people of our generation and with our upbringing are incapable of it. To join the brigands does not mean becoming wholly one of them, sharing with them all their unquiet passions, misfortunes, frequently ignoble aims, feelings and actions; but it does mean giving them new souls and arousing within them a new, truly popular aim. These wild and cruelly coarse people have a fresh, strong, untried and unused nature which is open to lively propaganda, obviously only if the propaganda is lively and not doctrinaire and is capable of reaching them. I could say much more on this subject should our correspondence continue.

Another precious element in the future life of the Russian people is, as mentioned before, the free economic commune, a truly precious element which does not exist in the West. The Western social revolution will have to create this necessary and basic embryo of all future organization, and its creation will give a lot of trouble to the West. Here it is created already. Should revolution occur in Russia, should the state with all its officials fall into ruin, the Russian peasantry would organize

itself without any trouble the same day. But Russia is faced with a difficulty of another kind which does not exist in the West. Our communes are terribly scattered, hardly know each other and are often at enmity with each other, according to the old Russian custom. Lately, *thanks to the government's financial measures*, they are becoming used to being joined into rural districts *(Volosti)* so that a rural district is progressively acquiring some popular awareness and content, but that is all. Rural districts do not know and do not want to know anything about each other. In order to achieve revolutionary success, to organize future popular liberty, it is essential that rural districts should, of *their own popular volition*, join into larger districts *(Uezdy)* and these into regions *(Oblasti)*. Regions should set up a free Russian Federation.

To awaken in our communes the consciousness of this necessity, for the sake of their own liberty and advantage, is again the task of the secret organization, since nobody else will want to take on this job which is totally contrary to the interests of the state and all privileged classes. This is no place to describe at length how to approach it, and how and what to do to awaken in the communes this saving consciousness, the only one promising salvation.

There, dear friend, are the main lines of a whole programme for the Russian popular revolution which is deeply imprinted on the people's instinct, on the whole situation of our people. He who wants to be at the head of a popular movement must adopt it as a whole and execute it. He who tries to foist *his own* programme on the people will be left holding the baby.

As a result of its ignorance and disunity, the people are unable to formulate the programme, to systematize it and to unite for its sake. Therefore they need helpers. Where can one find these helpers? This is the most difficult question in any revolution. In the West as a whole, up to now, the helpers of the revolution came from the privileged classes, and nearly always became its exploiters. In this respect also, Russia is more fortunate than the West. There is in Russia an enormous number of people who are educated, intelligent, and deprived at the same time of any position and career and without a solution to their problem. At least three-quarters of young persons studying at the present time find themselves in this position, theological students, children of peasants and petty

fight and destroy each other. It seems this is a terrible and hopeless anarchy.

But imagine, in the midst of this general anarchy, a secret organization which has scattered its members in small groups over the whole territory of the Empire but, is nevertheless, firmly united: inspired by a common ideal and a common aim which are applied everywhere, of course modified according to prevailing conditions: an organization which acts everywhere according to a common plan. These small groups, unknown by anybody as such, have no officially recognized power but they are strong in their ideal, which expresses the very essence of the people's instincts, desires and demands, strong also in their clearly realized purpose among a mass of people struggling without purpose or plan. Finally, they are strong in their solidarity which ties all the obscure groups into one organic whole, in the intelligence and energy of their members who have managed to create around themselves a circle of people more or less devoted to the same ideal and naturally subject to their influence—these groups will be able to lead the popular movement without seeking for themselves privileges, honours or power, in defiance of all ambitious persons who are divided and fighting among themselves and to lead it to the greatest possible realization of the socio-economic ideal and to the organization of fullest liberty for the people. This is what I call *the collective dictatorship* of the secret organization.

This dictatorship is free from all self-interest, vanity, and ambition for it is anonymous, invisible, and does not give advantage or honour or official recognition of power to a member of the group or to the groups themselves. It does not threaten the liberty of the people because it is free from all official character. It is not placed above the people like state power because its whole aim, defined by its programme, consists of the fullest realization of the liberty of the people.

This dictatorship is not contrary to the free development and self-determination of the people, or its organization from below according to its own customs and instincts for it acts on the people only by the natural personal influence of its members who are not invested with any power and are scattered like an invisible net in all regions, districts, and rural communities and, each one in his own place and in agreement with others, trying to direct the spontaneous revolutionary movement of the people

existing economic, social, and political order; but, in addition, having survived the success of the revolution, to make impossible after the popular victory the establishment of any state power over the people—even the most revolutionary, even your power—because any power, whatever it called itself, would inevitably subject the people to old slavery in a new form. Therefore our organization must be strong and vital to survive the first victory of the people and—this is not at all a simple matter—the organization must be so deeply imbued with its principles that one could hope that even in the midst of revolution it will not change its thoughts, or character or direction.

Which, then, should be this direction? What would be the main purpose and task of the organization? *To help the people to achieve self-determination on a basis of complete and comprehensive human liberty, without the slightest interference from even temporary or transitional power,* i.e. *without any mediation of the state.*

We are bitter foes of all *official power,* even if it were ultra-revolutionary power. We are enemies of all publicly acknowledged dictatorship; we are social-revolutionary anarchists. But you will ask, if we are anarchists, by what right do we wish to and by what method can we influence the people? Rejecting any power, by what power or rather by what force shall we direct the people's revolution? *An invisible force—recognized by no one, imposed by no one—through which the collective dictatorship of our organization will be all the mightier, the more it remains invisible and unacknowledged, the more it remains without any official legality and significance.*

Imagine yourself in the midst of a successful spontaneous revolution in Russia. The state and with it all socio-political order is in ruins. The people has risen, has taken all it needed and has chased away all its oppressors. Neither law nor power exist any longer. The stormy ocean has burst all dams. This far from homogeneous, on the contrary extremely varied mass, the Russian people, covers the illimitable space of the Russian Empire. It has begun to live and act for itself as it really is, and no longer as it was ordered to be, everywhere in its own way—general anarchy. The enormous quantity of mud which has accumulated within the people is stirred and rises to the surface. In various places emerge a large number of new, brave, clever, unscrupulous and ambitious people who, of course, attempt each in his own way to obtain the people's trust and to direct it to his own advantage. These people come into collision,

bourgeoisie, children of junior officials and ruined gentry . . . but need one speak about this, you know this world better than I do. If one considers the people as a revolutionary army, here is our General Staff, here is the precious material for a secret organization.

But this world must be really organized and *moralized* while your system depraves it and prepares within it traitors to the system and exploiters of the people. You must remember that there is very little true morality within this world with the exception of a small number of strong and highly moral characters which have emerged, by Darwinian selection, from sordid oppression and inexpressible poverty. They are virtuous, *i.e.* they love the people and stand for justice against any injustice, for all oppressed against all oppressors, only because of their situation, not consciously or deliberately. Choose a hundred people by lot out of this world and put them in a situation which would enable them to exploit and oppress the people—one can be sure that they will exploit and oppress it. It follows that there is little original virtue in them. One must use their poverty-stricken condition which makes them virtuous in spite of themselves and, by constant propaganda and the power of organization, arouse this virtue, educate it, confirm it in them and make it passionately conscious. Whereas you do the opposite: following the Jesuit system you systematically kill all personal human feeling in them, all feeling of personal fairness—as if feeling and fairness could be impersonal—educate them in lying, suspicion, spying and denunciation, relying much more on the external hobbles with which you have bound them, than on their inner courage. It follows that should circumstances change, should they realize that the terror of the state is stronger than the fear which you inspire, they would (educated by you) become excellent state servants and spies. The fact is now indisputable, my dear friend, that the overwhelming majority of your comrades who have fallen into the hands of the police have betrayed everything and everybody without any special efforts by the government and without torture. This sad fact should open your eyes and make you change the system if you are at all capable of amendment.

How can this world be made more moral? By arousing in it frankly and consciously, by strengthening within its reason and

heart one all-embracing passion for the liberation of the people and all mankind. This is the new and only religion which has the power to move souls and create a collective force of salvation. From now on this must be the exclusive content of our propaganda. Its immediate aim is the creation of a secret organization, an organization which should, at one and the same time, create a popular auxiliary force and become a practical school of moral education for all its members.

Let us first of all define more exactly the aim, meaning, and purpose of this organization. As I have mentioned several times above, according to my system it would not constitute a revolutionary army—we should have only one revolutionary army: the people—the organization should only be the staff of this army, an organizer of the people's power, not its own, a middle-man between popular instinct and revolutionary thought. A revolutionary idea is revolutionary, vital, real and true only because it expresses and only as far as it represents popular instincts which are the result of history. To strive to foist on the people *your own* thoughts—foreign to its instinct—implies a wish to make it subservient to a new state. Therefore, an organization sincerely wishing only for a liberation of people's life, must adopt a programme which should express popular demands as fully as possible. It seems to me that the programme delineated in the first number of *The People's Cause (Narodnoe Delo)* fully answers this purpose.[19] It does not foist upon the people any new regulations, orders, styles of life, but merely unleashes its will and gives wide scope to its self-determination and its economic and social organization, which must be created by itself from below and not from above. The organization must accept in all sincerity the idea that it is a servant and a helper, but never a commander of the people, never under any pretext its manager, not even under the pretext of the people's welfare.

The organization is faced with an enormous task: not only to prepare the success of the people's revolution through propaganda and the unification of popular power; not only to destroy totally, by the power of this revolution, the whole

19.The first number of the journal had been edited by Bakunin and Zhukovsky in September 1868.



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